

Matthew 5:48

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-5/matthew-548/>

Jesus summarizes and commands the character standard of those who are in His kingdom.

The parallel account of this teaching is found in Luke 6:36

Jesus sums up everything He has been teaching between Matthew 5:20 and 5:47 with this concluding remark: *Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* He is contrasting the external self-righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees in v. 20 with the *perfect* and complete righteousness of *your heavenly Father*.

Matthew 5:20 expresses a standard of behavior for entering the kingdom of heaven in terms of a minimum: “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” The righteousness of the Pharisees was externally brilliant, but in reality they were whitewashed tombs full of decaying flesh and bones (Matthew 23:27). So it seems that avoiding hypocrisy is a starting place for entering the kingdom.

Here Jesus states a standard of behavior in terms of affirmative action. To enter the kingdom we cannot *be* like the world, or even pretend *to be* righteous like the Pharisees. *We are to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect.*

The word Matthew uses that is translated *perfect* is “telos” (G5056). It means fulfilled and complete, fully functioning, or finished. It describes an accomplished purpose or intent. It is the word Jesus cries out on the cross when He declared, “It is finished” (John 19:30). It is the word Paul uses to describe His personal mission statement in Colossians 1:28 “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete (telos) in Christ.”

Jesus is saying that we are to live and have the same level or degree of harmony (righteousness) as our *heavenly Father*. We are to *be* complete in our walk. To be whole. Part of being whole is to seek harmony with all around us, in truth and grace. Resisting the world and its evil while loving people. As we will see, people often don’t understand Jesus. Jesus will be crucified for being *perfect*, or complete. He courageously exposed the hypocrisy and corruption of the political and religious elites. He also mingled with tax collectors and sinners, while exhorting them to repentance.

He calls His disciples to similarly live the character of and quality of moral wholeness. We are *to be* what our Creator intended us *to be* and live out and fulfill His design and purposes for us. If we desire to gain the *reward* of becoming God’s *sons*, we are *to be* like our *heavenly Father*. We are to reflect His image, and are called to be self-governing, community-building seekers of harmony.

When we act as God wants us to, we enter, participate, and reign in His *heavenly* kingdom. The reward God promises for seeking His kingdom and His righteousness is to call us His sons, and appoint us to reign over His kingdom when He comes in His glory (Matthew 5:45; Revelation 3:21).

Biblical Text

Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.